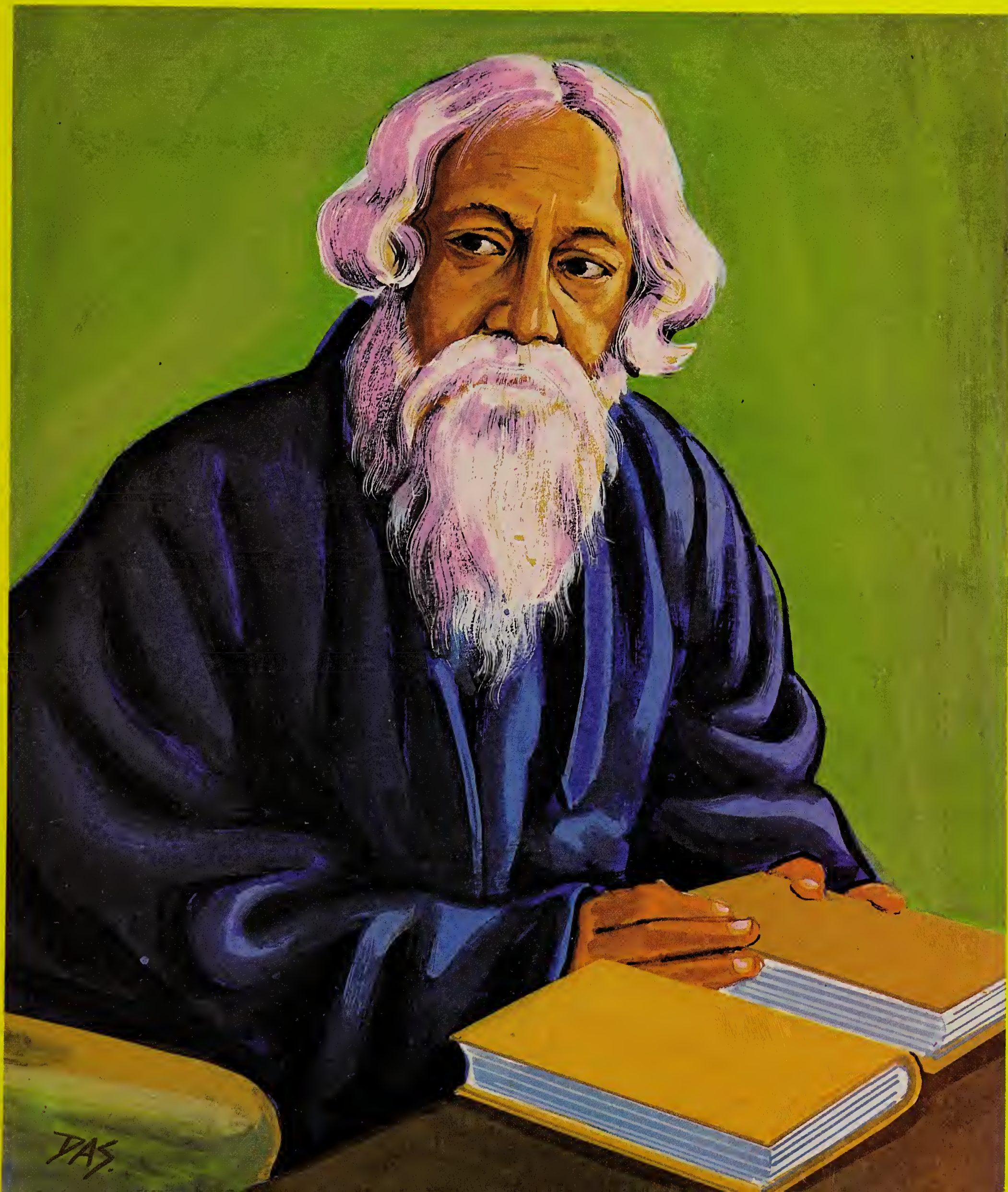




Bharat Ke
Gaurav Chitra
Katha Mala

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

H.C. JAYAL



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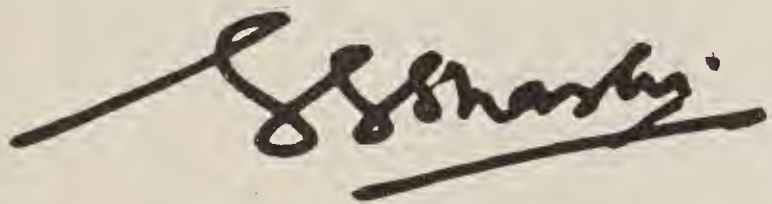
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PREFACE

In this series entitled *Bharat Ke Gaurav Chitra Katha Mala*, it is our aim to present life stories of eminent Indian personalities, in the form of coloured pictures. *Rabindranath Tagore Chitra Katha* is one of the flowers of this mala (garland) the fragrance of which will we are sure, gladden the hearts not only of children and young people, but of readers of all age groups.

Rabindranath Tagore occupies an important position among the builders of modern India. A man of towering intellect, poet and literature, writer and artist, educationist and social reformer, Tagore was a man of versatile achievements. His work transcends the limits of space and time, establishing him as a renowned world figure.

This book is an humble attempt to present to the readers, the unique personality of Gurudev.



(Dr. Shyam Singh Shashi)
Director

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a not so well-to-do brahmin family left its obscure village in Jessore district and came to settle in Calcutta. The head of the family, Panchanan, set up his house near the new harbour. A man of amiable and idealistic disposition, he soon came to be held in high regard by his neighbours. They called him Thakur, which meant a virtuous man. His work brought him into contact with the East India Company. The English merchants unable to pronounce the name Thakur, changed it to 'Tagore'. Such is our first introduction to the renowned Tagore family.

The fourth generation descendant of Panchanan Tagore was Dwarakanath (1794-1846) who was to make a significant contribution not only to his family history, but to the history of the country as well. A radiant personality, the wealthy Dwarakanath was a true Indian at heart. He joined hands with Rammohun Roy to improve the condition of the country. He not only successfully served the Minimum Wage Board and the Salt and Opium Boards, but also opened a bank of his own, calling it the Union Bank with an initial capital of 14 lakh rupees. He also established several business firms.

Dwarakanath wanted to train his eldest son for a career in business and administration. But his hopes were not fulfilled. Pious and virtuous by nature Devendranath showed no interest in banking or business. He was deeply touched by the ideals of Rammohun Roy and considered it his foremost duty to save the Hindu society from further decline.

He saw to it that the members of his family got good education and lived comfortably. But he did not allow them any unnecessary luxury. Rabindranath wrote of his father:

"Though we lived in a wealthy and comfortable atmosphere, he did not let us be spoilt by pomp and luxurious living. Thus, the magnificent gates of wealth were open to us but a little, so that we could have the privilege of letting our individual capabilities blossom to their fullest extent. This attitude of our father made us more fortunate than even those who would have been wealthier than us."

In the following pages, we begin the story of Rabindranath Tagore, with the curtain opening on Mahrashi Devendranath.

Rabindranath's father Maharshi Devendranath (1817-1905) led a simple and austere life. His mother, Sharada Devi, too was a virtuous woman.



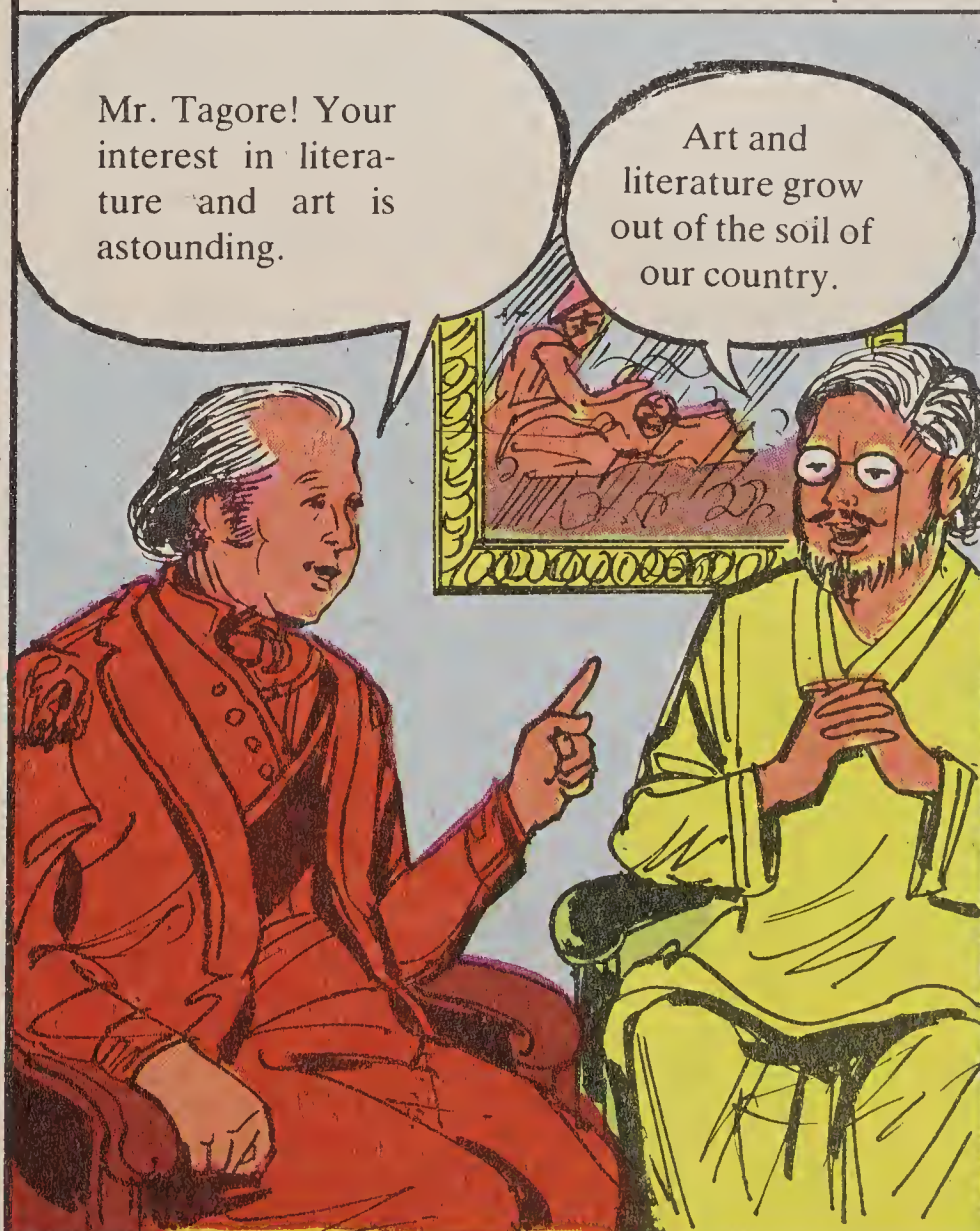
The family led a comfortable life. The atmosphere in the house showed great culture, with emphasis on literature, art and music.



The British friends who would not pronounce Thakur called them Tagore.

Mr. Tagore! Your interest in literature and art is astounding.

Art and literature grow out of the soil of our country.



On 7th May, 1861, Maharshi Devendranath's wife Sharda Devi gave birth to her fourteenth child who was named Rabi.

There are many of us around to look after the child. You should take more care of your health.

What can I do? He doesn't leave me. But I'll take care of my health too.



Rabi grew up in the warmth and affection showered on him by the entire family.

Children! Go in, now. What if the teacher hasn't turned up. Sit and carry on your studies.

Yes, father.



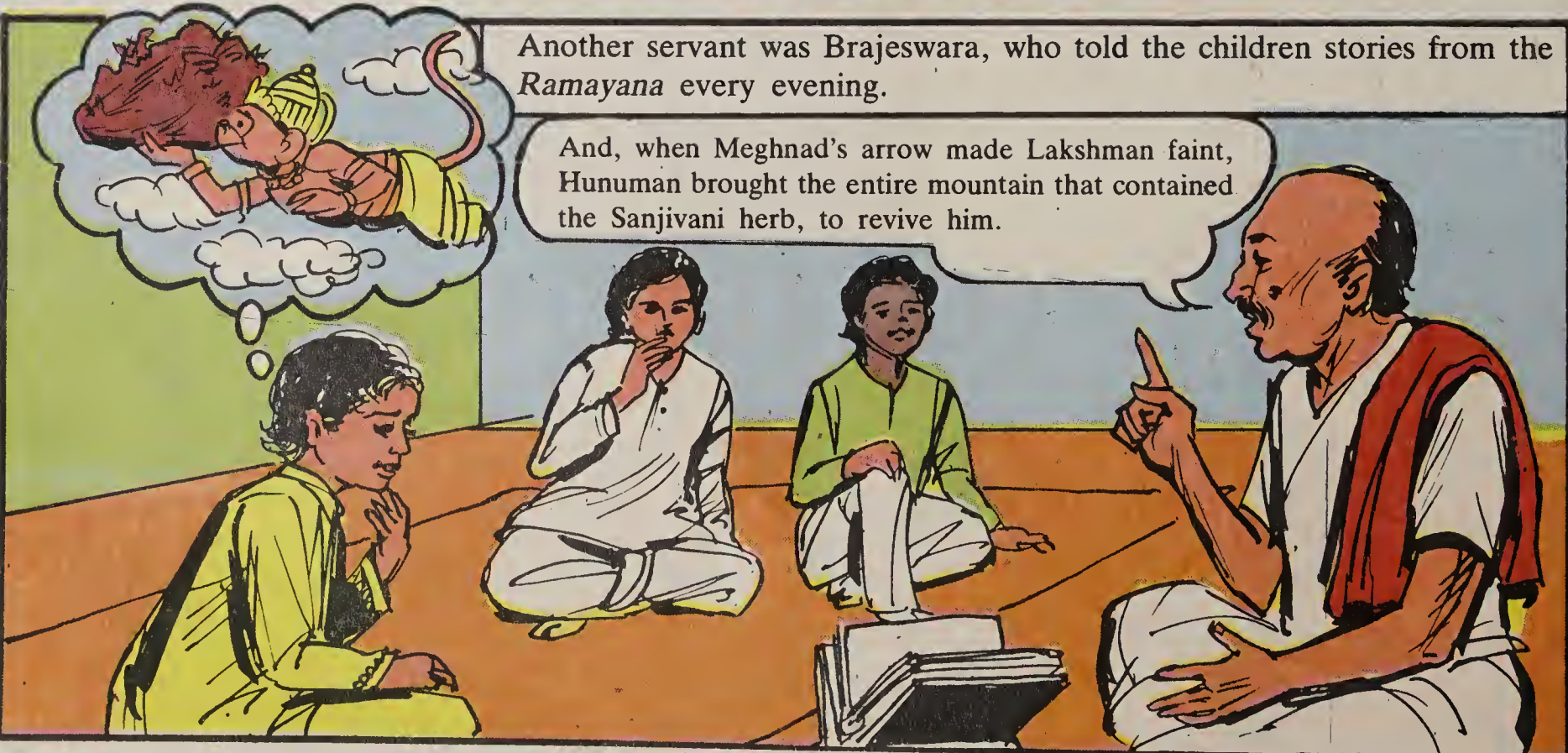
Shyam! Please take Rabi for an outing. I am tired.

As you say, Manji! Come on, young master.

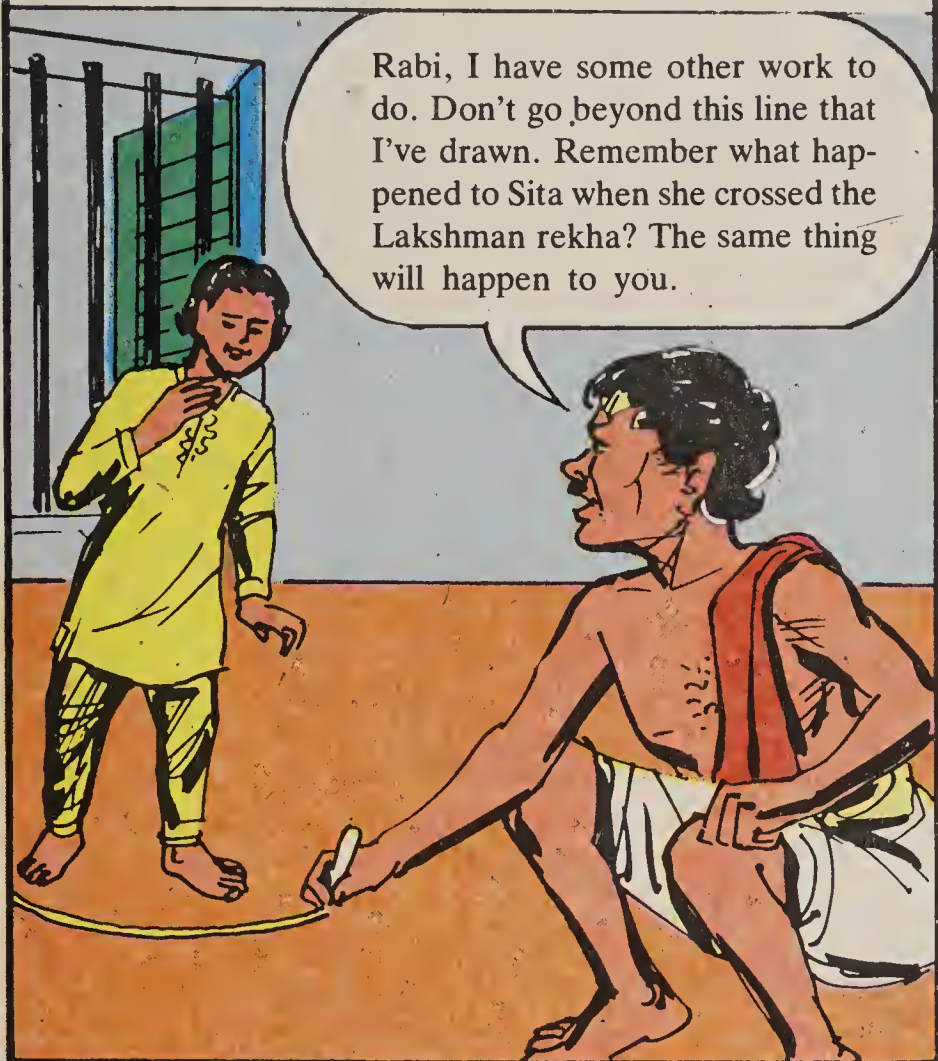


Another servant was Brajeswara, who told the children stories from the Ramayana every evening.

And, when Meghnad's arrow made Lakshman faint, Hunuman brought the entire mountain that contained the Sanjivani herb, to revive him.



Rabi was an innocent child. Shyam, who had the responsibility of looking after the children was a clever fellow and used various tricks to get away from duty.



Rabi was given to solitude. Shut up alone in his room, he often looked out of the window and became lost in thought.

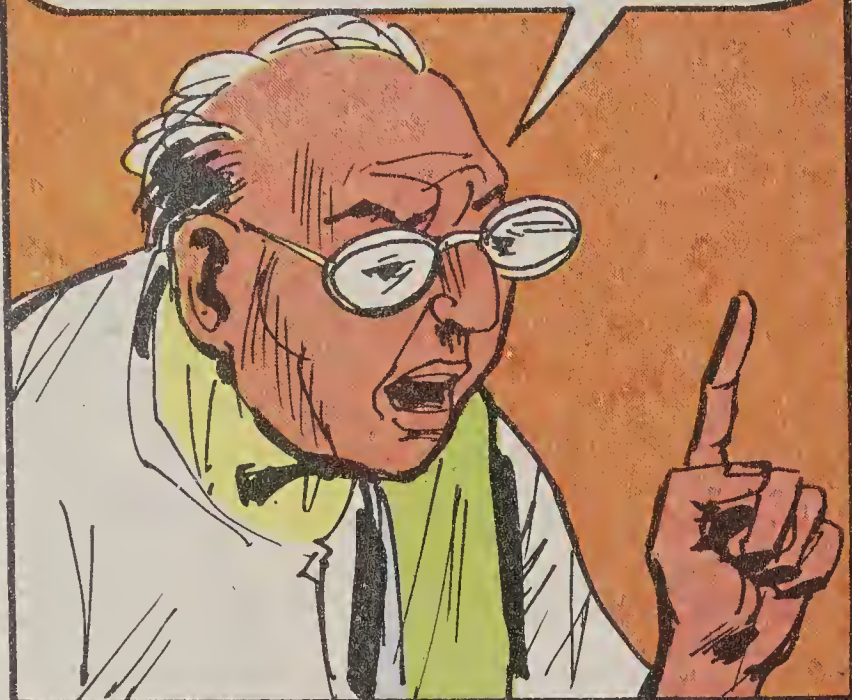


Sharada Devi's health was not good. Her maid Pyari told the children stories at night.

There was a valiant and just king. He had a son who was also very promising and brave. Once the queen went on a pilgrimage. The king sent the prince along with the queen with a small army. On the way a gang of dacoits attacked them. The prince defeated and drove away the dacoits and the queen returned safely after her pilgrimage.

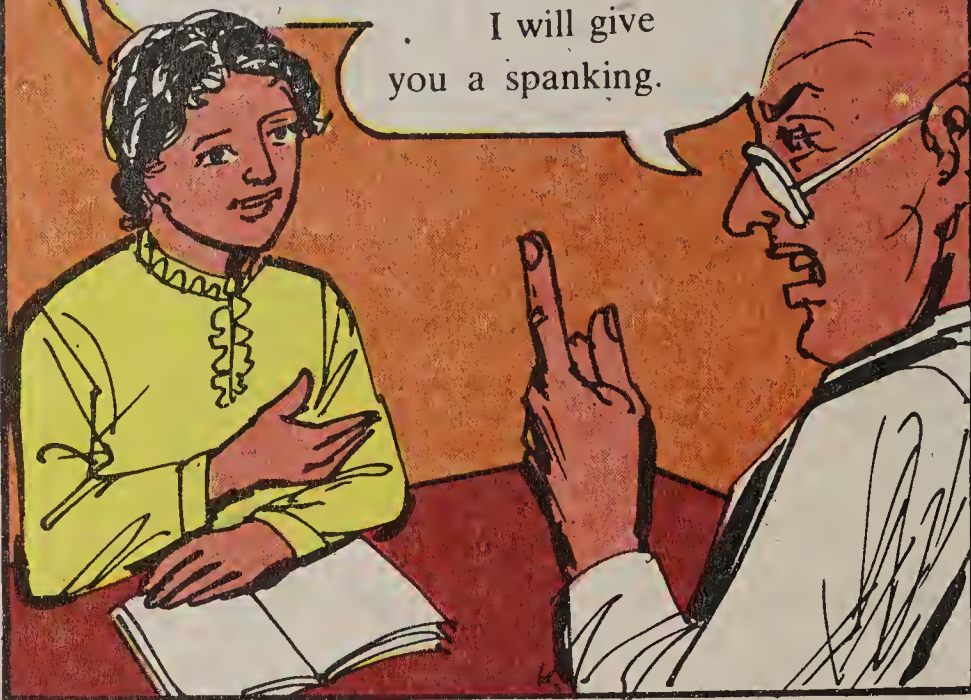


Rabi! Read carefully. Write: R for RAT



Sir, I don't want to study at home. I want to go to school, like my brother.

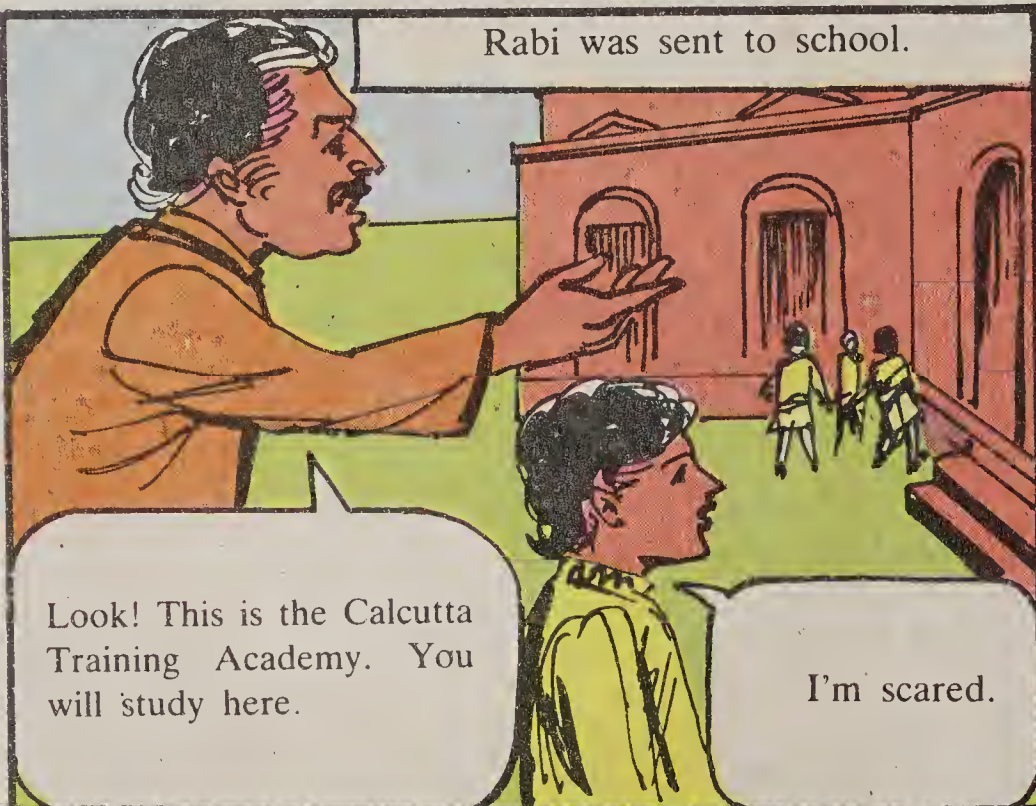
Rabi finish your lesson; or
I will give
you a spanking.



Rabi was sent to school.

Look! This is the Calcutta Training Academy. You will study here.

I'm scared.



Why are you scared? Here you'll have plenty of friends who'll play with you.



While in class, sometimes Rabi would be lost in thought.



Rabi! You're not paying attention. Stand up.



School seemed like a prison to Rabi. When he came home, he would beat at the railing of the house to let off his anger.



When Rabi was five years old, it was decided to put him in Normal school. His father, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore met the Principal in connection with his son's admission.



At home, too, the children's studies were looked after well. Teachers were employed to teach them different subjects including physical exercises.



Meanwhile Rabi had started composing little poems. He wrote his first poem when he was seven.

Rabi! You must write a poem for us today.



From then on, whenever he found time, Rabi would sit down with a note-book and write poems.



Nature was his inspiration.



One day at school, his teacher happened to see Rabi's note-book containing his poems. He was greatly impressed.



Rabi! You write very good poems. You must write one tomorrow and read it out in the class.



Bhabhi! Today I read out a poem in class. The teacher was much struck.

Really! Let me hear it.



Our Rabi writes very good poems.

If that be so, you must encourage him.



It's time to perform the thread ceremony of Soumendra, Rabi and Satya.

Yes. You're right.



Thus, when Rabi was eleven years old, his thread ceremony was performed along with his brother Soumendra and nephew Satya.



After the thread ceremony, the three boys were put in a room for meditation.



Soon afterwards, Rabi's father Maharshi Devendra-nath planned a journey to the Himalayas.

Rabi! I propose to go on a journey to the Himalayas. Would you like to accompany me?

Certainly, father.



A few days after the journey began

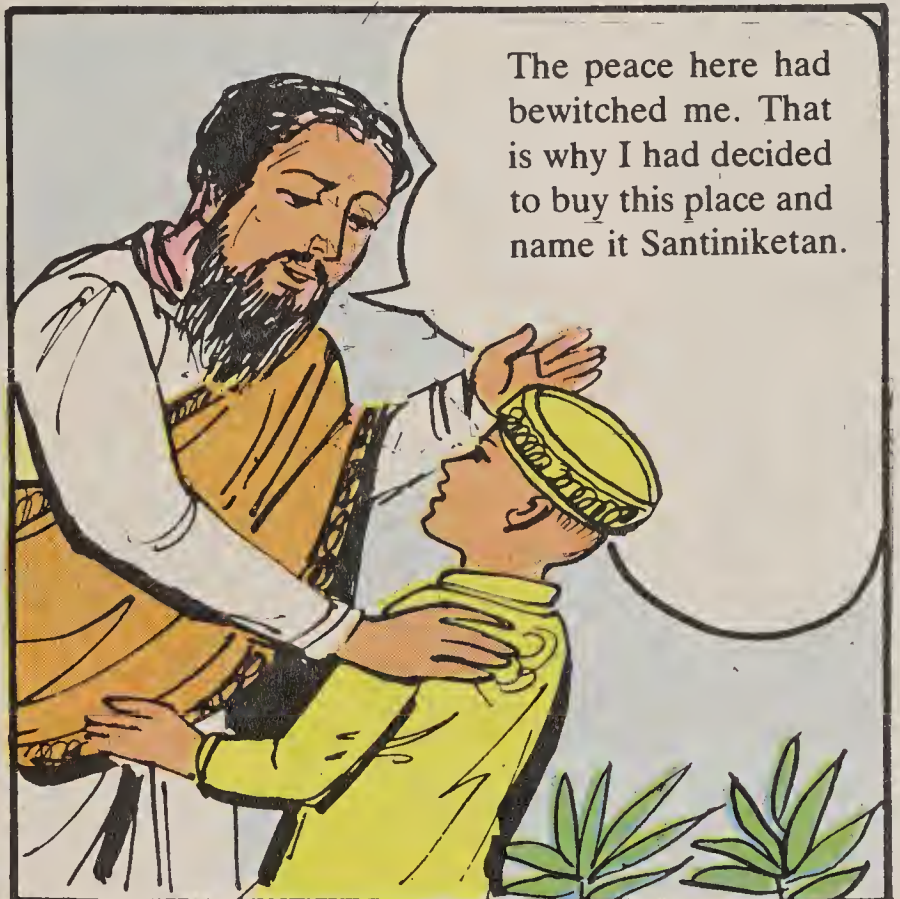
Father! What place is this?

Son! This is Bolpur.





The peaceful surroundings induced Maharshi to sit under a tree and meditate. When his meditation was over....

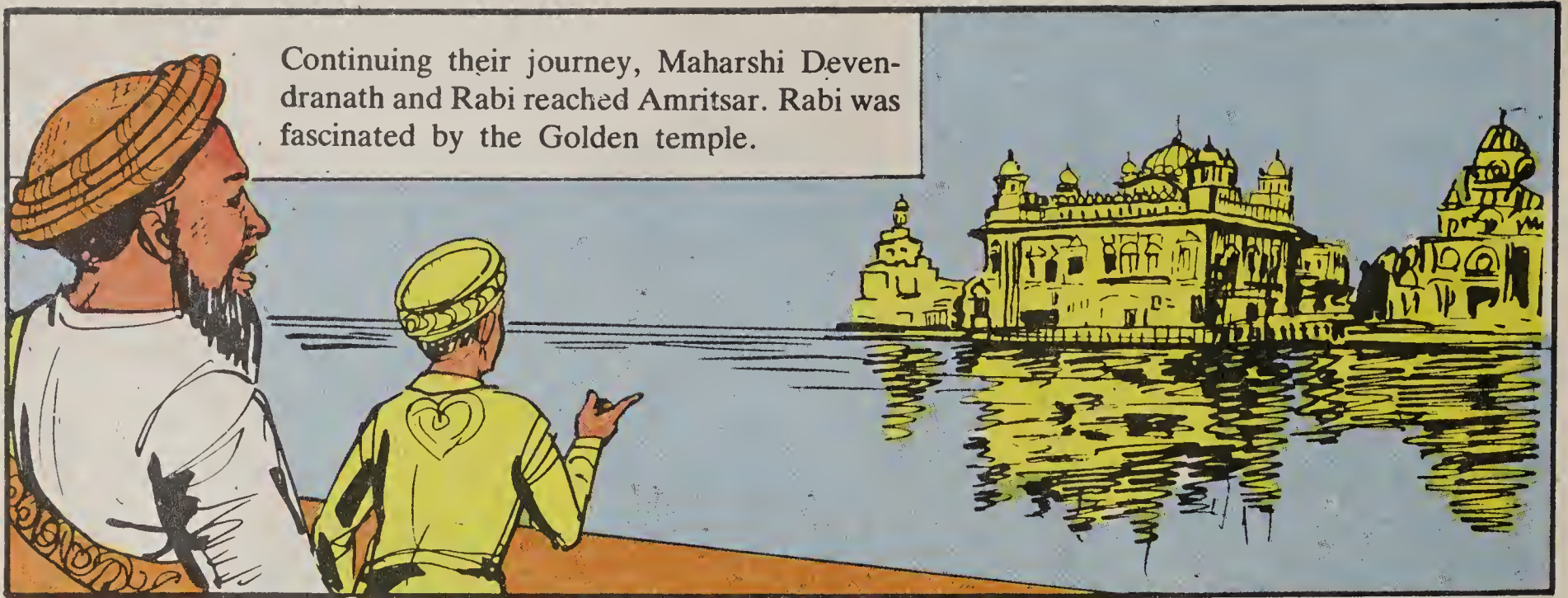


The peace here had bewitched me. That is why I had decided to buy this place and name it Santiniketan.

Father! Please let us stay here for a few days more. I don't feel like leaving this place at all.



All right, son. We may stay.



Continuing their journey, Maharshi Devendranath and Rabi reached Amritsar. Rabi was fascinated by the Golden temple.



Leaving Amritsar, on the last lap of their journey, they reached Bakrota near Dalhousie and stayed in a bungalow there.

Early in the morning, Maharshi recited shlokas from the Upanishads and Rabi listened intently.



Rabi was free to wander around here. The beauty of the place captivated him.



In the evenings,

Rabi! Let me hear you sing a good bha-jan.

As you say, father.



Maharshi Devendranath and his son Rabi stayed in Bakrota for nearly two months.

The rains have started. It's time we left this place.

But father! I just don't feel like leaving the place.



After returning to Calcutta, Rabi often narrated to his friends the interesting experience he had had on the journey.

And then we went through a dense forest where we heard wild elephants trumpeting.



By now, Rabi had become known as a good singer.

Son! Please sing from the Ramayana for us.

As you say, mother.



Rabi did not show interest in his studies. He was inattentive and often wrote poems during class. His long poem, 'Abhilasha' was written in the classroom.



In 1875, Rabi recited his poems in the Hindu mela and these were later published in the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*. Exhibitions were held in these melas to popularize swadeshi goods.



His elder brother Jyotirindranath encouraged him in music.

I'll play a tune on the piano and you try to set your poem to the tune.

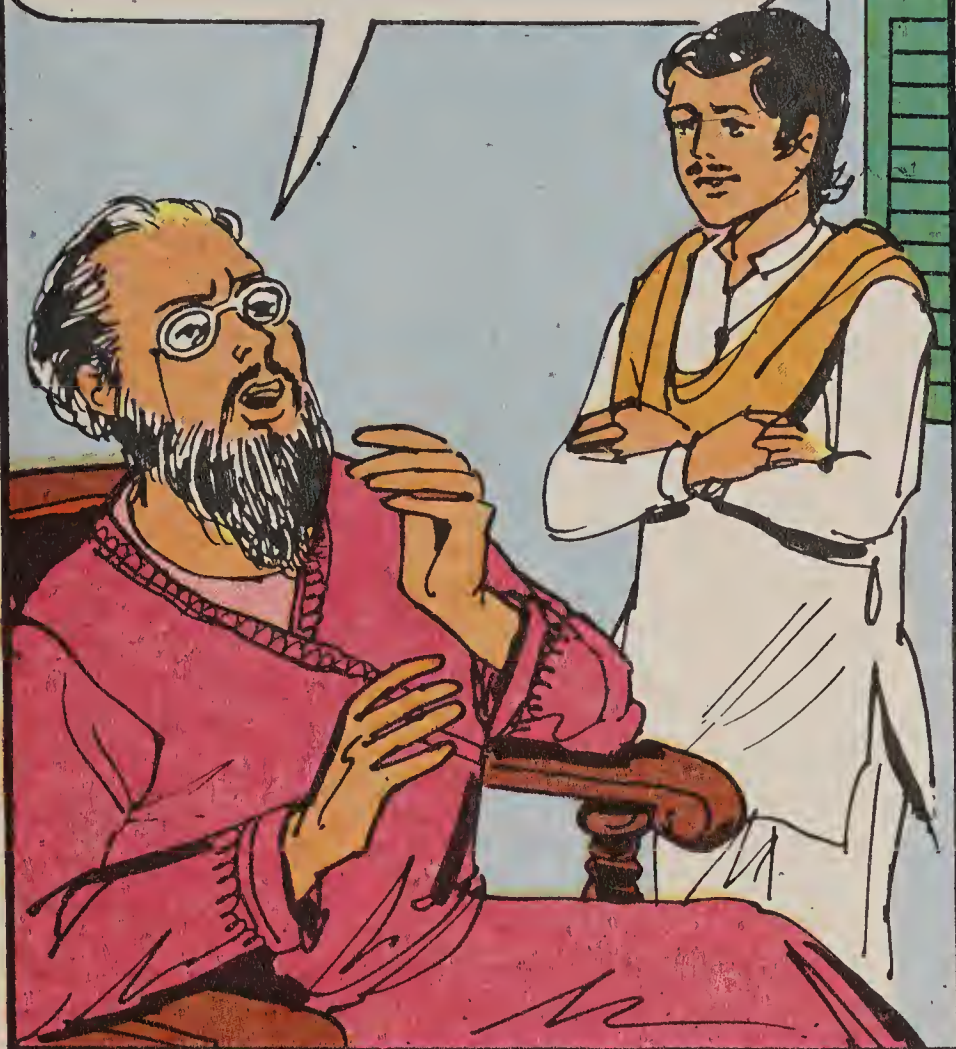


Rabi began to spend a lot of his time in writing.



In the period of two to three years, he had many of his books published.

Rabi! You've discontinued your studies here. I want you to go to England and prepare yourself to compete for I.C.S.



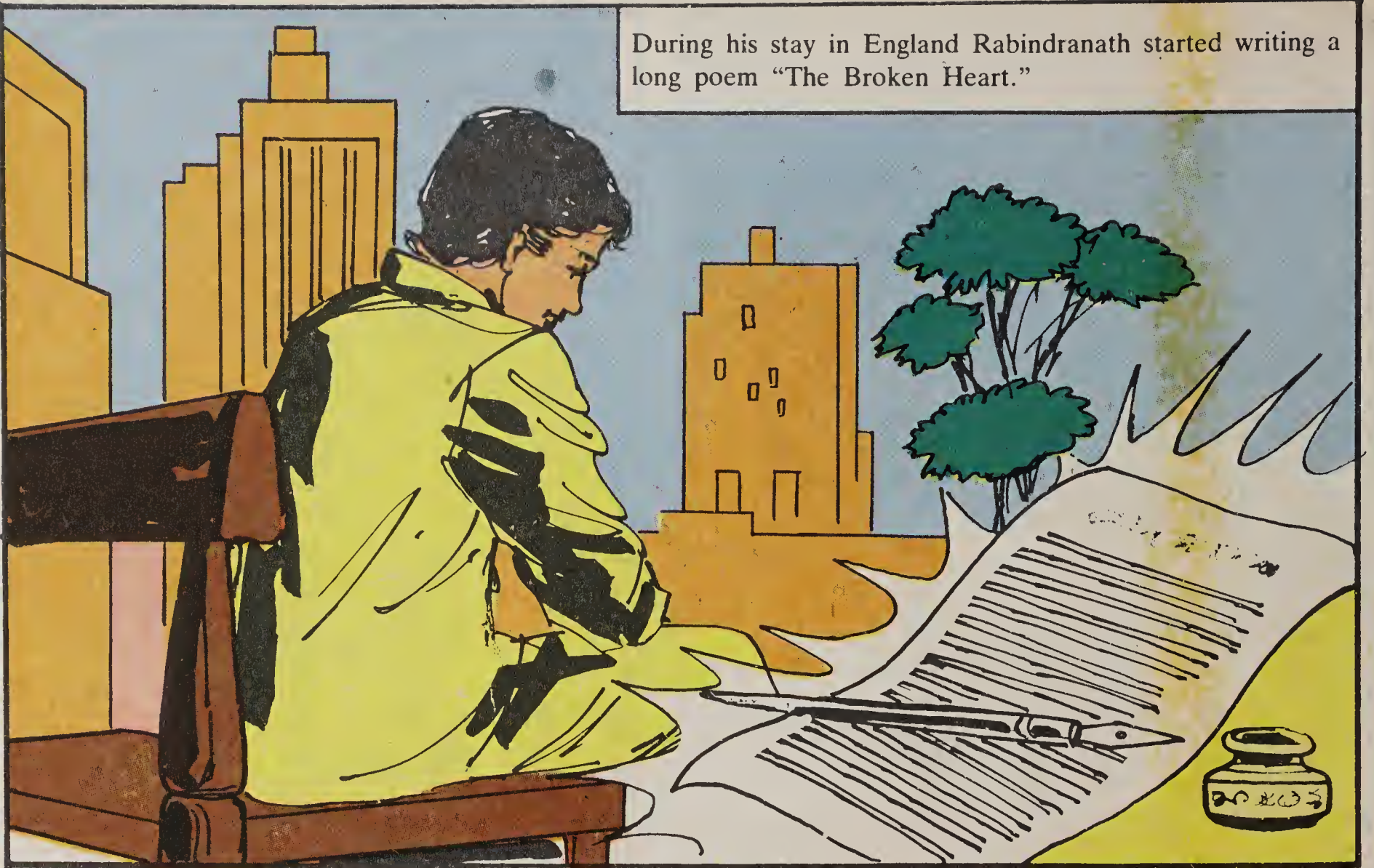
And thus, in September, 1878, Rabindranath set out for England with his elder brother Satyendranath.



In England, Rabindranath began his studies. He got the opportunity of staying with an English family (Dr. Scott). He was deeply influenced by his family's way of life and ideals.



During his stay in England Rabindranath started writing a long poem "The Broken Heart."



In February 1880 Rabindranath abandoned his studies and returned home.

Come, Rabi! May you live long.



After some time, an opera based on Rabindranath's musical play called 'Valmiki Pratibha' was staged. He himself played the part of Valmiki.



The success of 'Valmiki Pratibha' encouraged Rabindranath to write yet another composition called "Kal Mrigya".



In 1883 Rabindranath went to stay with his brother Satyendranath for a while.





Here, Rabindranath wrote his first important play, 'The Revenge of Nature'.

After returning to Calcutta, on 9th December, 1883, Rabindranath married Bhavatarini Devi. After marriage she was known as Mrinalini Devi. Everybody called her 'Chhoti Bahu'



Chhoti Bahu! Come! I'll teach you Bengali and Sanskrit from today.



Read this, while I write something.

All right.



While teaching his wife, Rabindranath was also creating literary pieces. He created many pieces for children, the most popular of them being the novel, *Mukul*.

Rabindranath spent quite some time with his wife going around the country.



Chhoti Bahu! We have moved around a lot in these few years. Now I'd like to settle down and do some writing.

In the next few years, Rabindranath produced many excellent writings and earned great fame.



As his fame spread, Rabindranath was more and more to be seen in respected literary gatherings of the day. These gatherings were frequented by eminent personalities.

Please garland Rabindra Babu. We've gathered here today to welcome him.

Thank you.

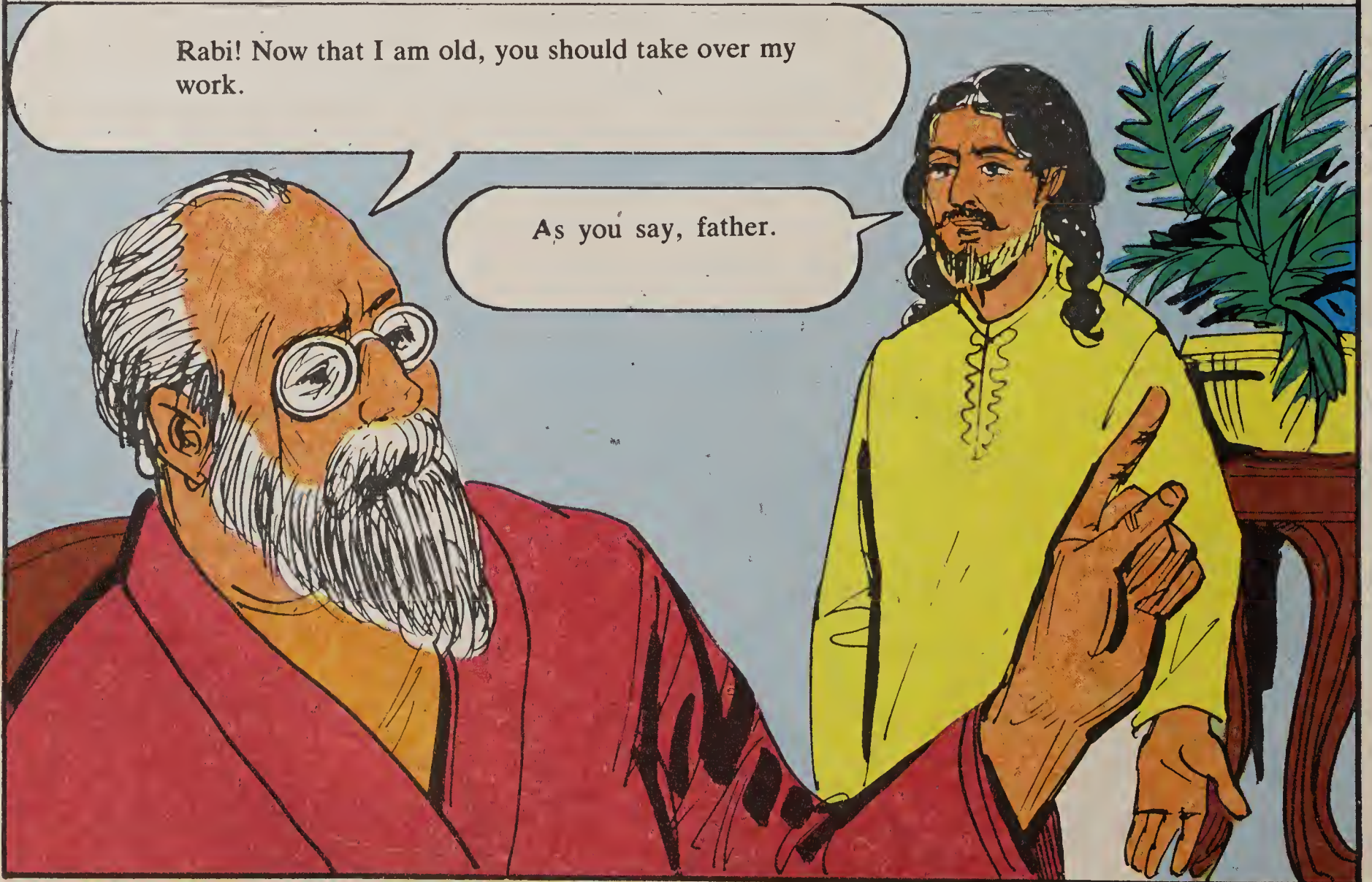


By this time Rabindranath's fame as a writer had already spread.

In 1890 Maharshi Devendranath Tagore asked Rabindranath to look after the Zamindari in different parts of Bengal and Orissa.

Rabi! Now that I am old, you should take over my work.

As you say, father.



Rabindranath was deeply pained to see the extreme poverty of the peasantry.



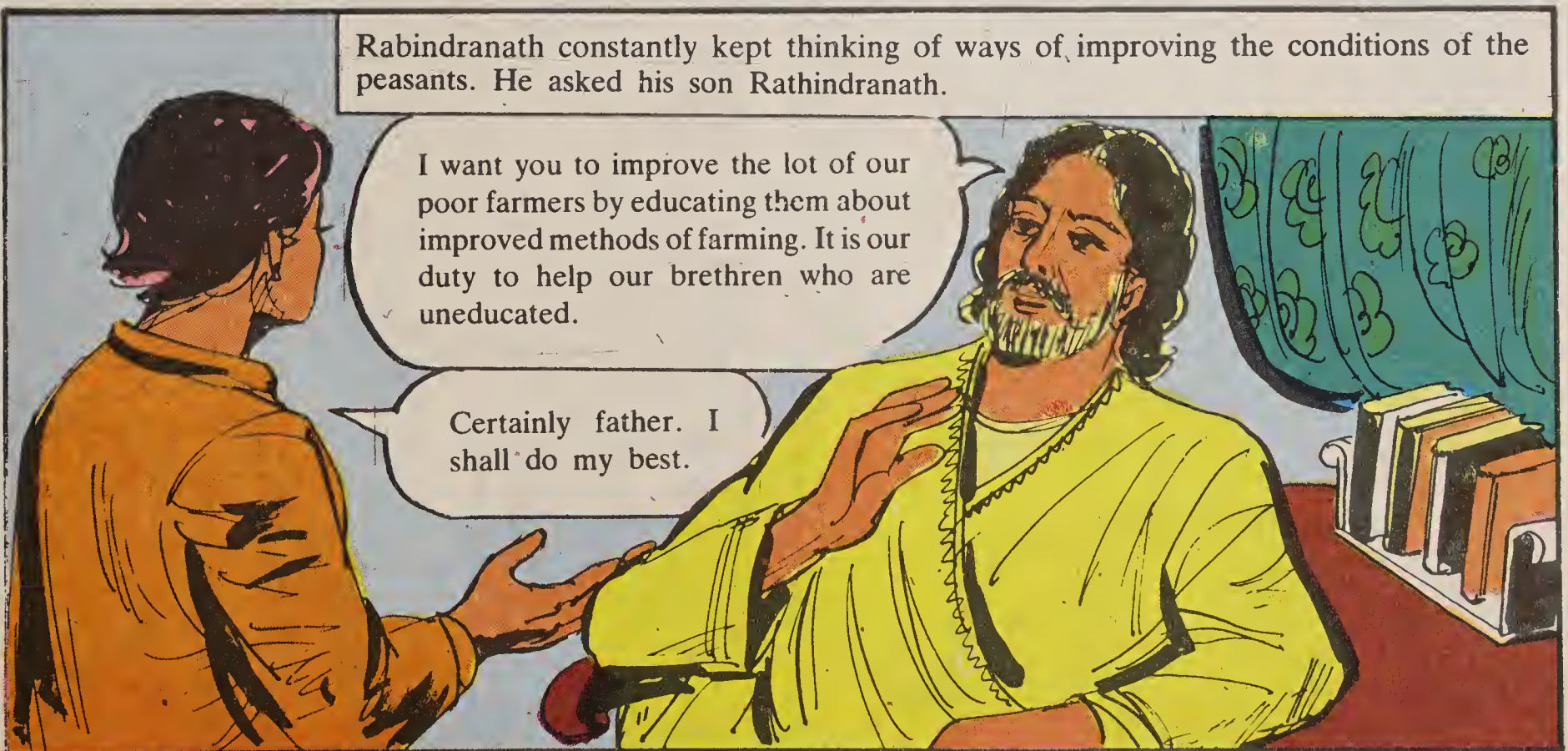
You must change your way of life and methods of cultivation. Then only will you see better days.



Rabindranath constantly kept thinking of ways of improving the conditions of the peasants. He asked his son Rathindranath.

I want you to improve the lot of our poor farmers by educating them about improved methods of farming. It is our duty to help our brethren who are uneducated.

Certainly father. I shall do my best.



Rathindranath thereafter encouraged the peasants to adopt new and improved methods of farming.

For a good harvest, along with improved methods of farming, you must use improved quality of seed.



Work started in right earnest for improving the condition of the peasants. For this Rabindranath kept himself in constant touch with the farmers.

I will try to help you as much as possible but you should also try to stand on your feet and become self-sufficient.



Besides looking after the village welfare work, Rabindra Babu continued with his literary activities. He wrote his well-known classics—*Sonar Tari*, *Chitra*, *Chaitali* and many others.



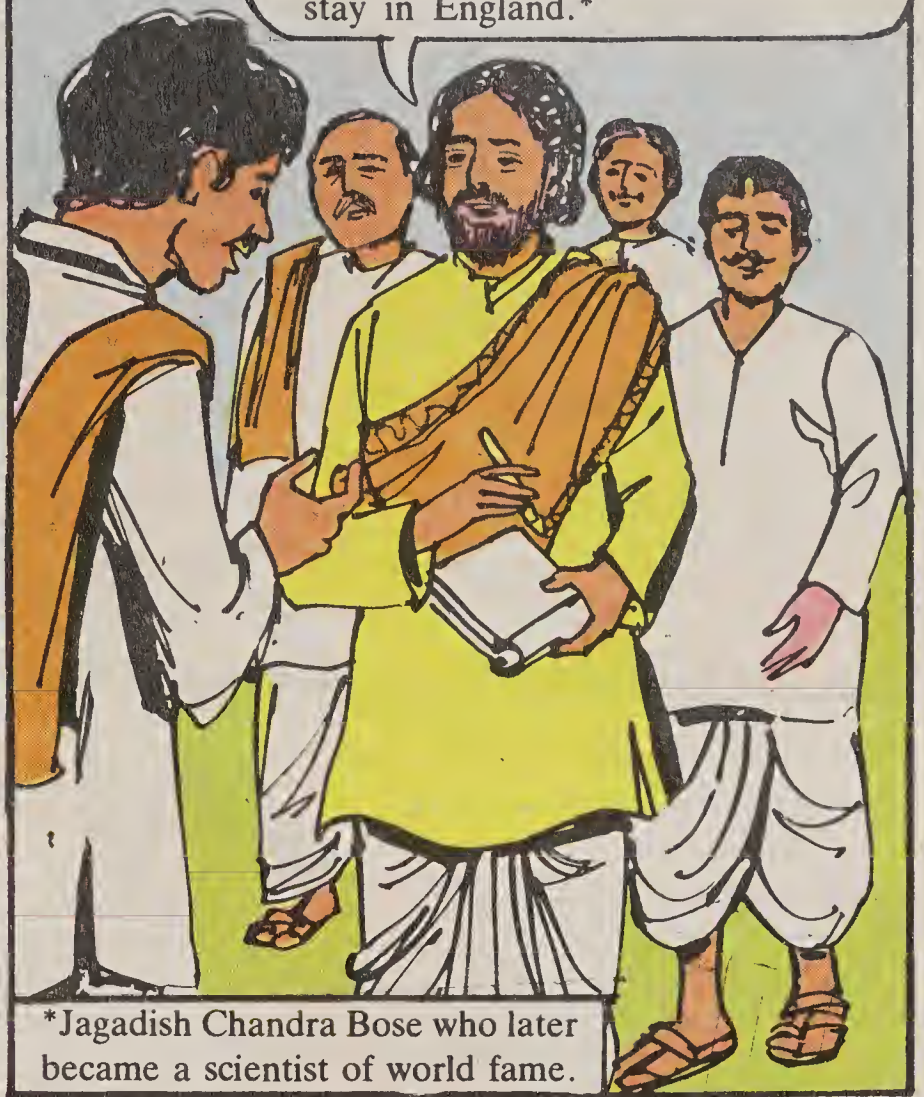
In 1898, when the British Government passed the Sedition Act, a public gathering was called at the town hall in Calcutta to protest against it. Here, Rabindranath read his article entitled 'Kanth rodh' in order to awaken the people to work selflessly for the freedom of the country.



Rabindranath addressed gatherings and sang many of his songs to awaken public opinion.



Chatterjee Babu! We've come to raise funds to help Jagadish Bose's stay in England.*



*Jagadish Chandra Bose who later became a scientist of world fame.

In 1901, Rabi Babu performed the marriages of his two daughters, Madhurilata and Renuka.



In 1901, Rabi Babu also opened a school at Santiniketan.

Children! If you do not understand anything, please feel free to ask.



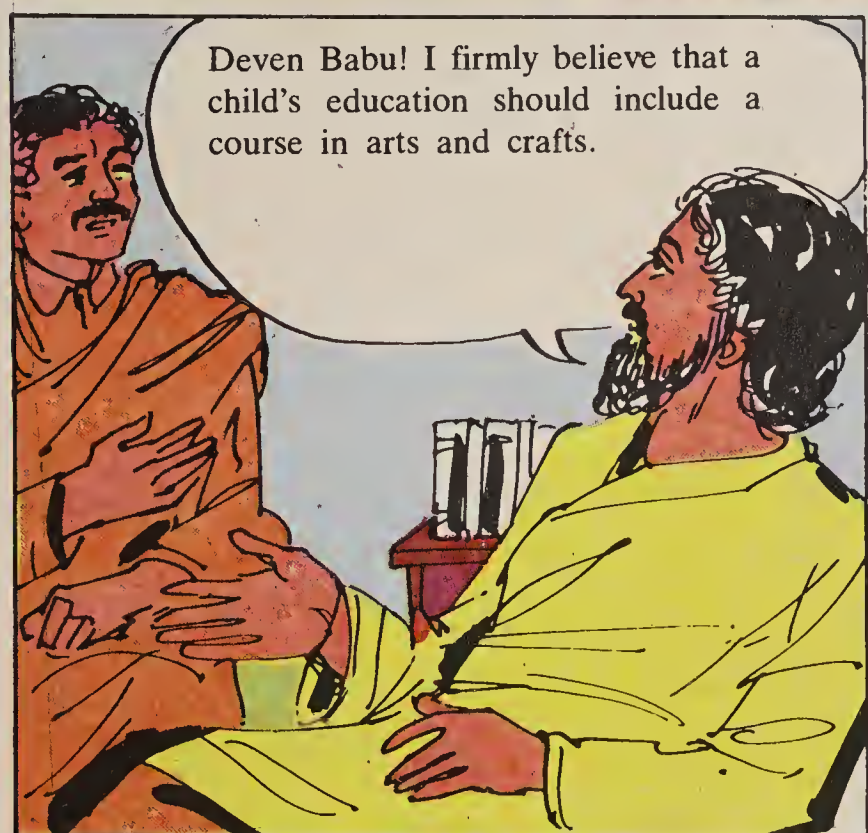
Mrinalini Devi took good care of the children.

Son! Take a little more food.

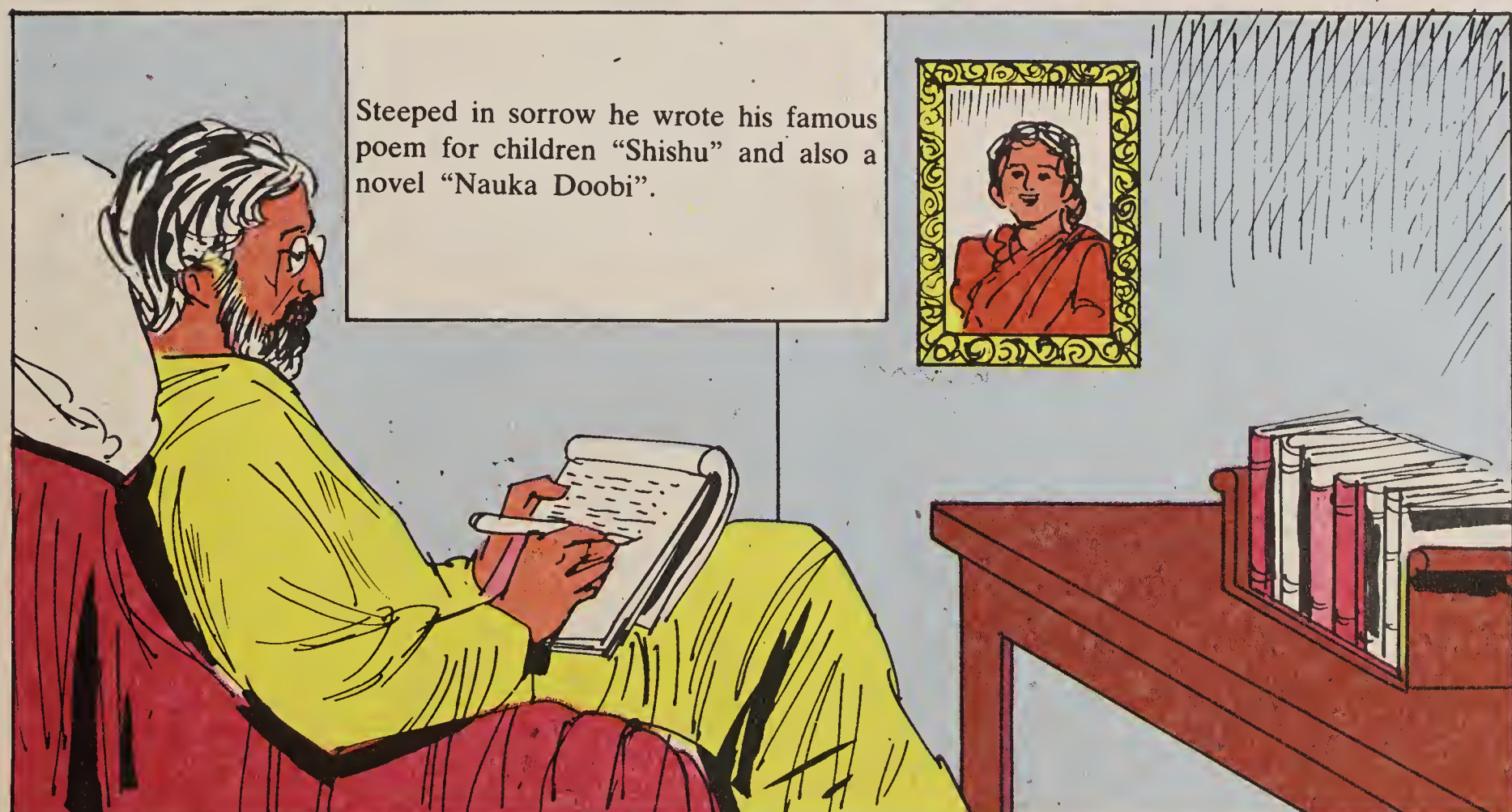


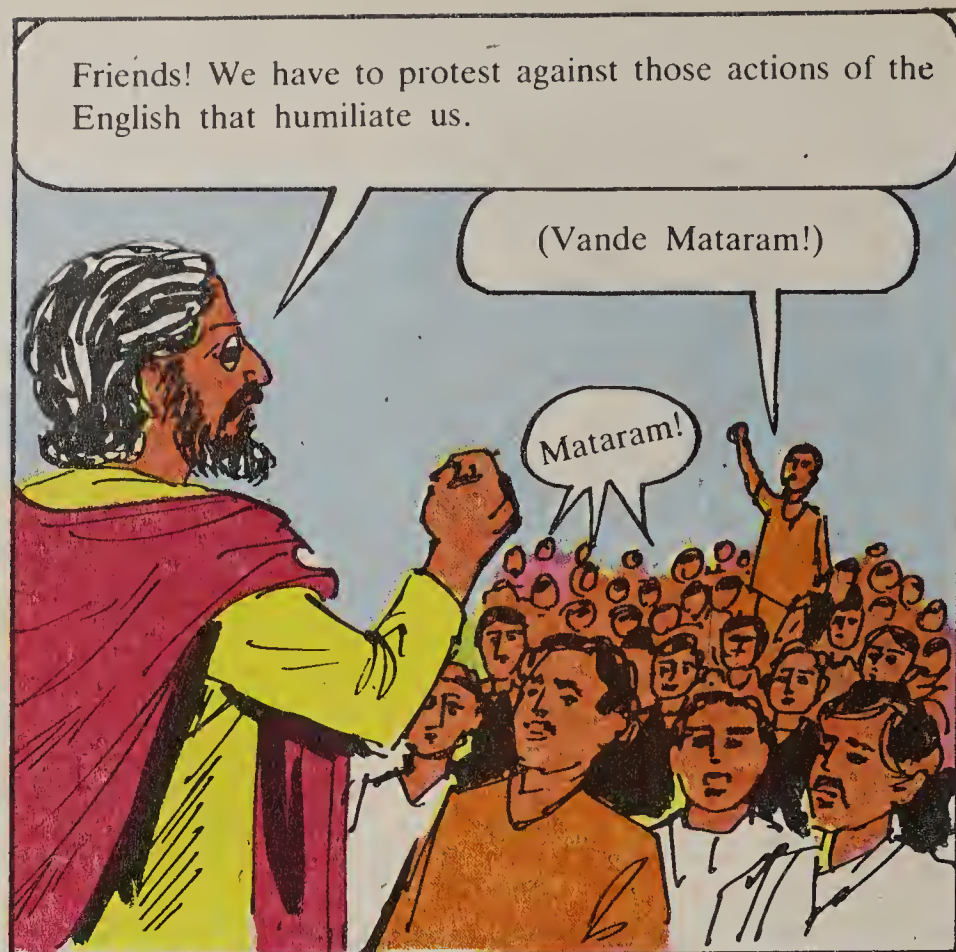
After some time, Rabi Babu found himself in financial difficulties in running the school



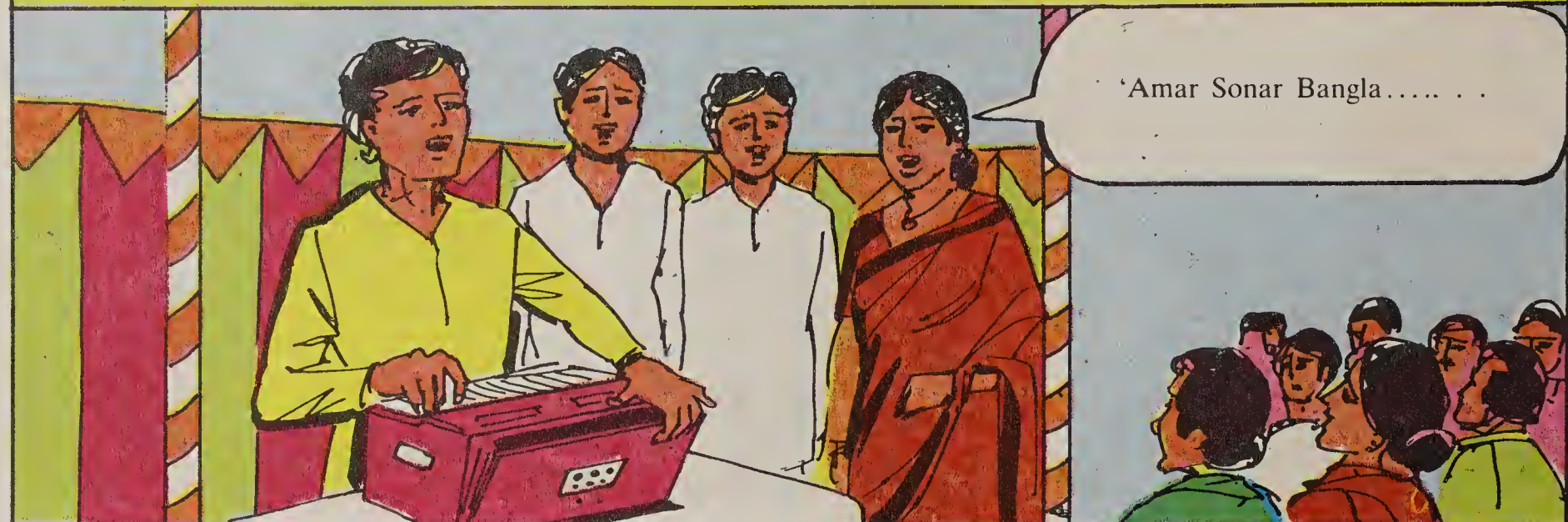


The successive deaths of his wife and daughter Renuka in November 1902 and September 1903, left Rabindranath a very unhappy man.





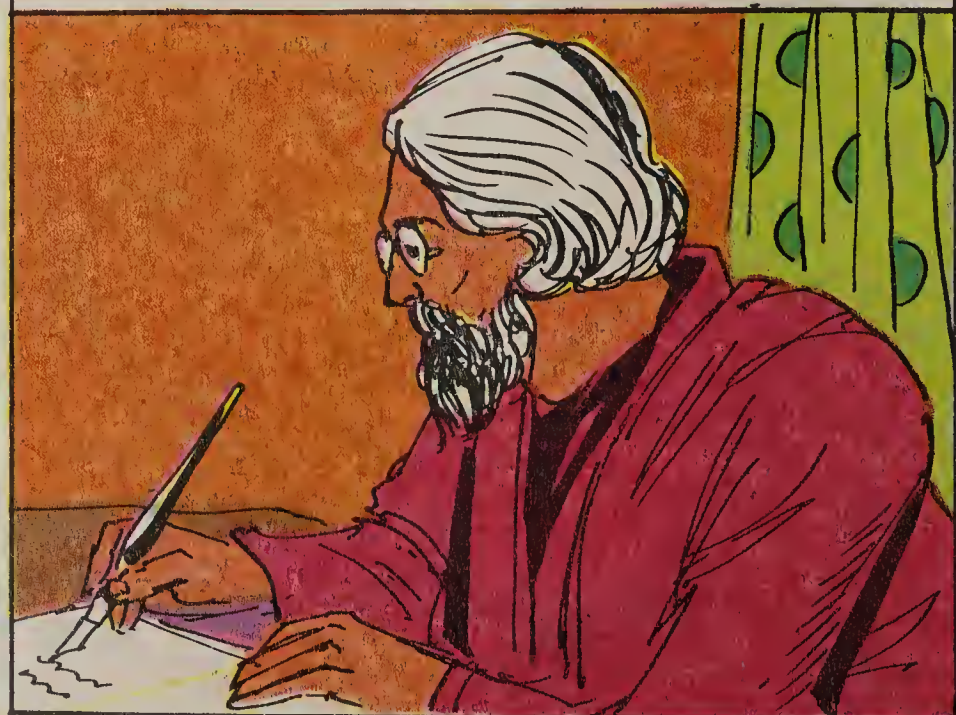
Besides expressing protest at public meetings, in order to awaken the public, Rabindranath wrote several emotional and meaningful songs. One such song has become very famous.



In November 1907, Samindranath, Rabindranath's youngest and most beloved son, passed away.



The death of his wife, daughter as well as son created in Rabindranath's mind a feeling of asceticism. In the years 1909 and 1910, he wrote several poems that were later published as *Gitanjali*.



On the occasion of his 50th birthday, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad honoured Rabindranath at the Calcutta Town Hall.



In the same year Rabindranath went to England along with translations of his works 'Gitanjali' and 'Giti-malya'. There he met a number of literary people.

It is good that you have come to England. You are welcome here.

Thank you very much. It is a good opportunity for me to be here and meet friends.



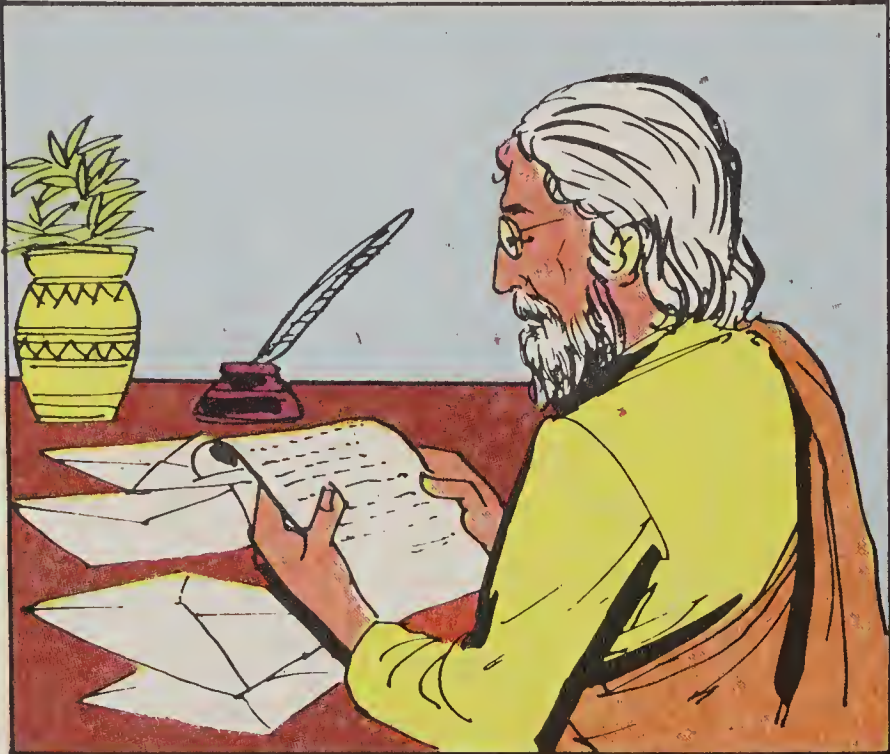
From England, Rabindranath proceeded to America, where he lectured at the Harvard university.



In November 1912, the English version of *Gitanjali* was published in London. It was widely noticed in newspapers.



By now, Rabindranath was known all over the world. He received fan letters from many countries.



13th November, 1913

Gurudev! A telegram!
It says you've won the
Nobel Prize for
Gitanjali

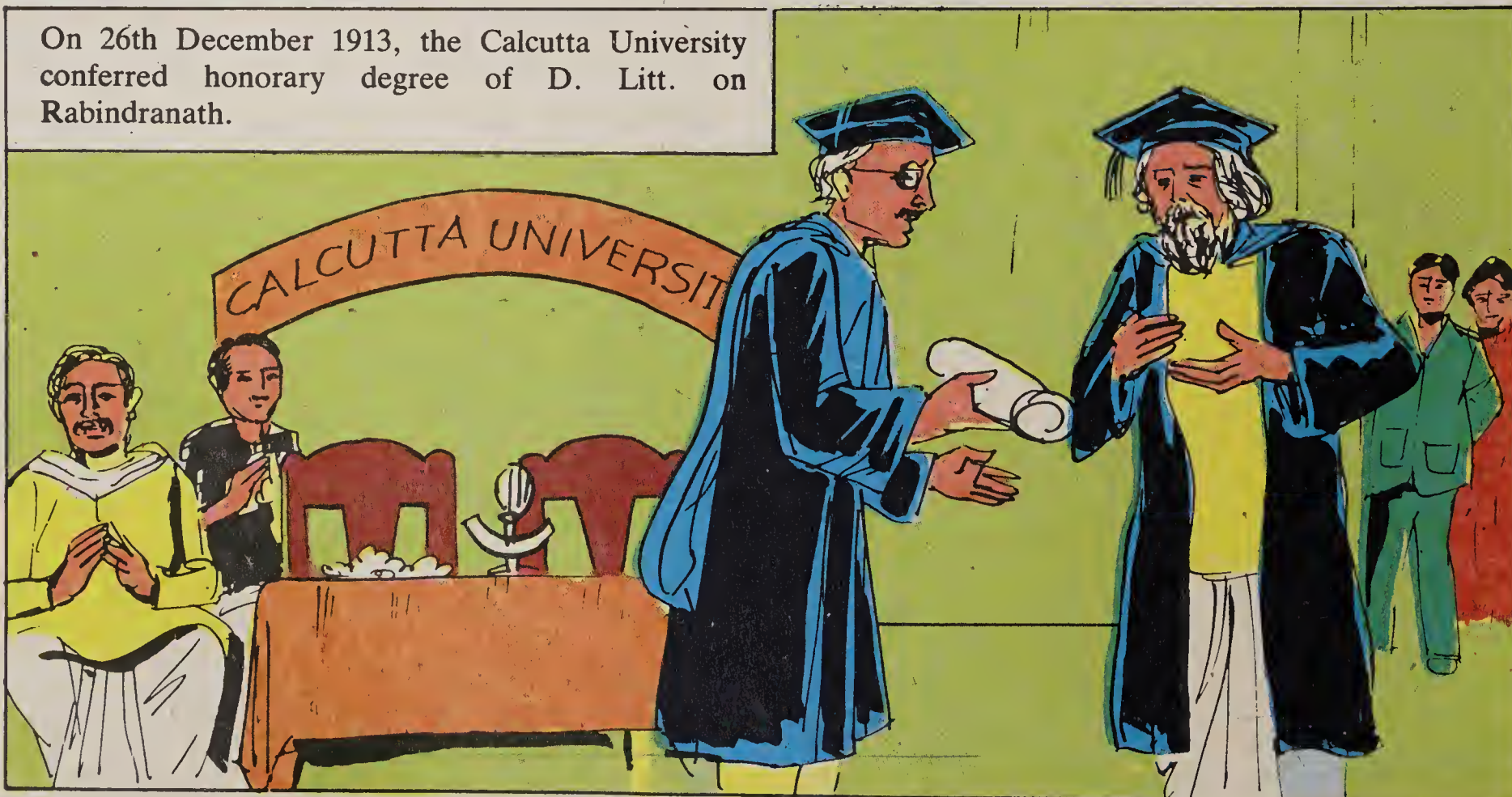


Please
accept our
congratula-
tions.



Rabi Babu!
You've brought
glory to our coun-
try. The country is
proud of you.

On 26th December 1913, the Calcutta University
conferred honorary degree of D. Litt. on
Rabindranath.



In 1915, Mahatma Gandhi came on a visit to Santiniketan. By now the fame of Santiniketan had spread far and wide, and many students from far away places came there.

Gurudev! You did me a great favour by giving shelter to my African friends in your ashram.

You're always welcome here.



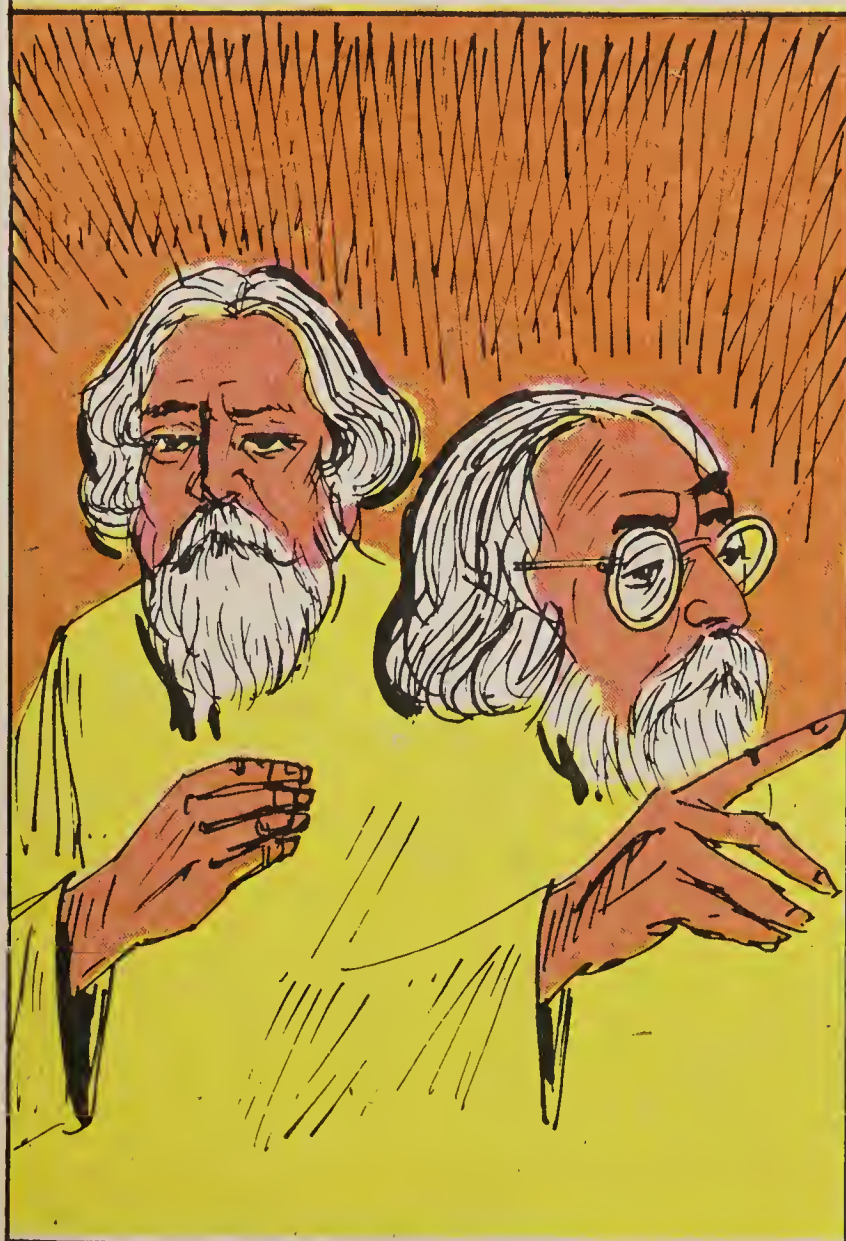
In 1915, Rabindranath was honoured with Knighthood by the Government. This was considered a great honour and many people came to congratulate him.

Gurudev! We are all very happy.

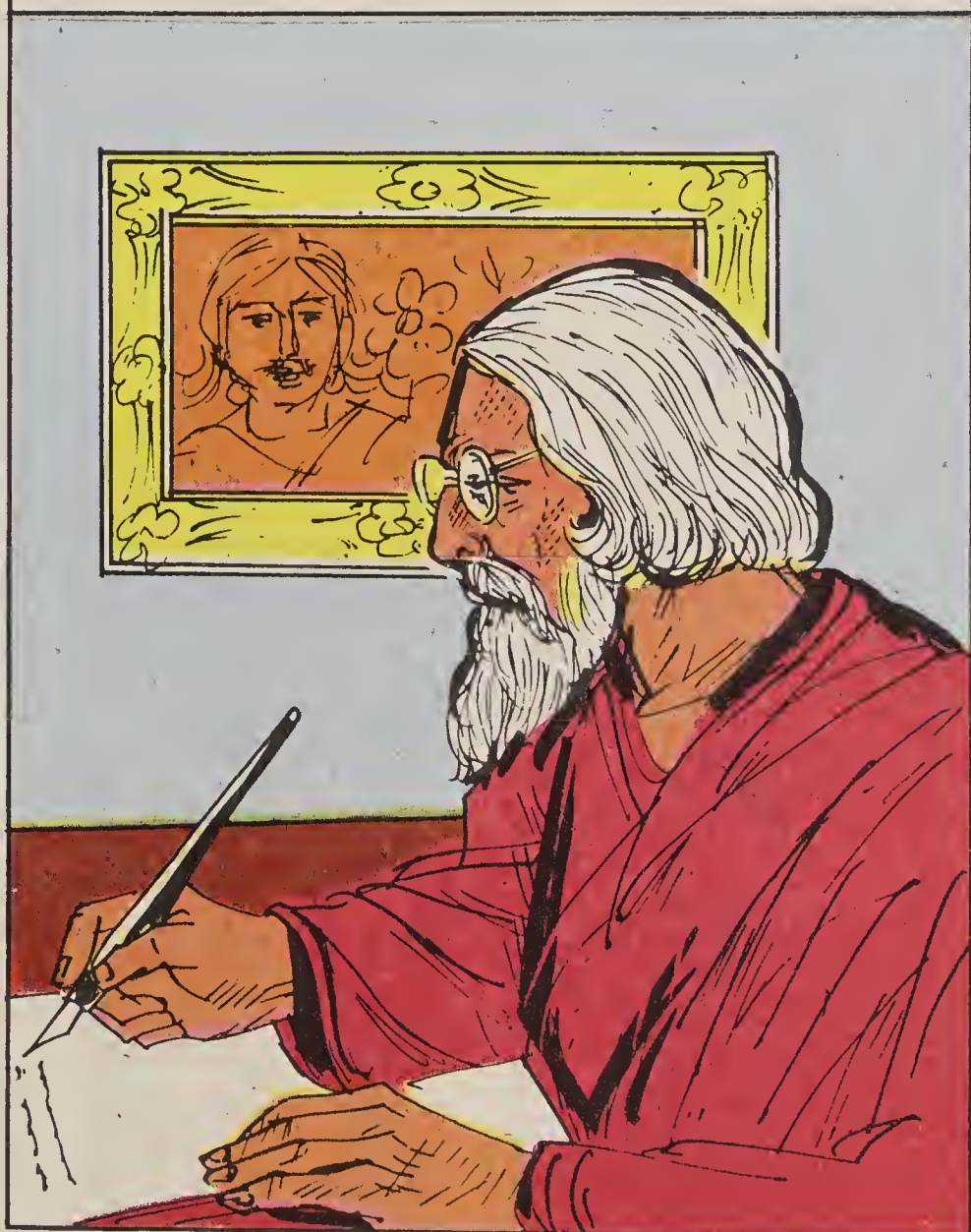
Congratulations.



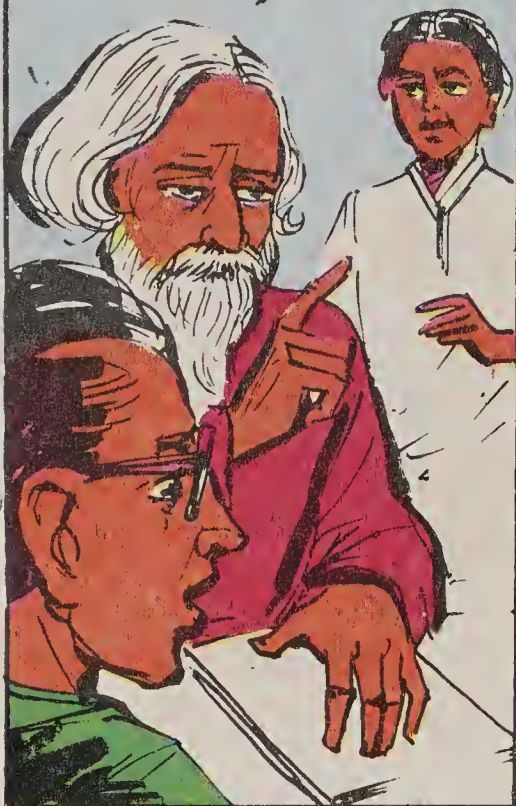
In the years 1916 and 1917, Rabindranath went to Japan and America and gave many lectures in the universities there.



Disgusted with the Jalianwala Bagh massacre of 13th April 1919, Rabindranath wrote a letter to the Viceroy renouncing his Knighthood.



And now, we have to have our school here raised to the status of a university.



Thus, in 1921, as a result of Gurudev Rabindranath's hard work, Santiniketan was renamed Visva-Bharati and was raised to the status of a University.



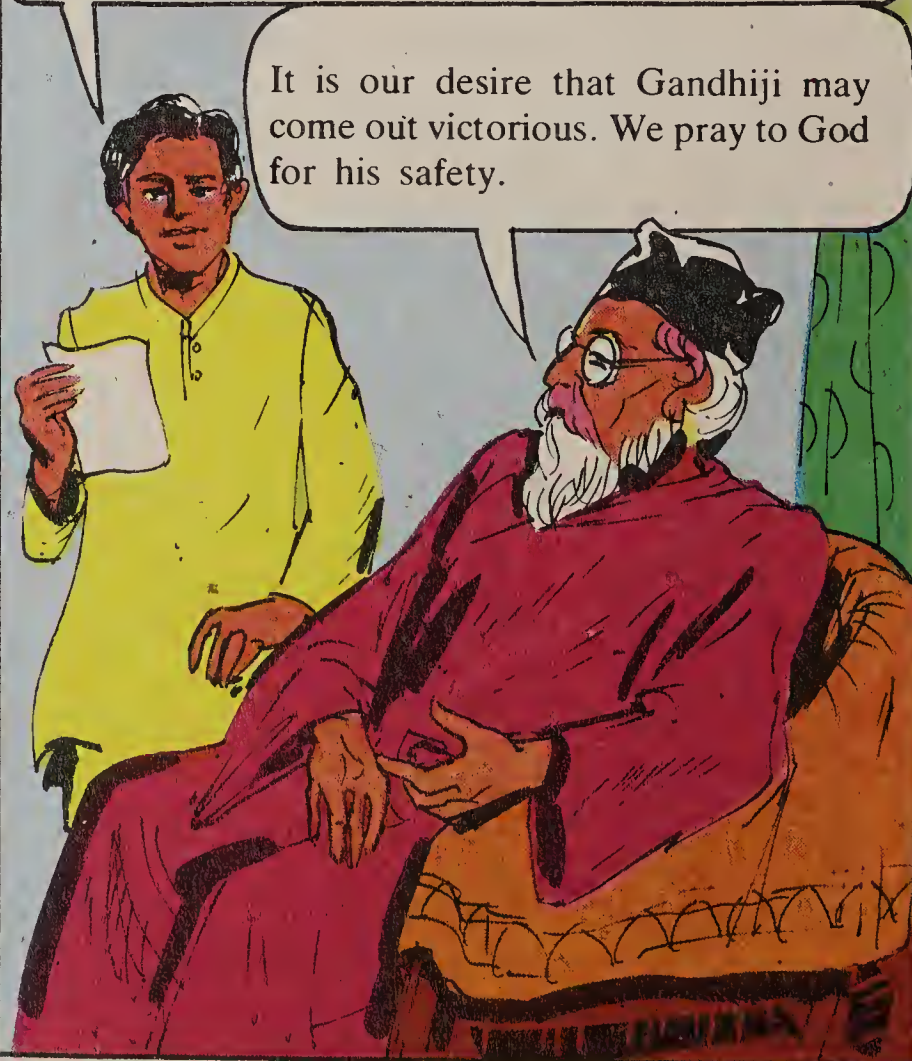
Rabindranath visited many European countries in 1926 and was warmly welcomed everywhere.



When Gurudev returned home, the country was experiencing a great political upheaval.

Gurudev! Gandhiji's letter has come. From today, he is going to observe fast in protest against the injustice of the British rule.

It is our desire that Gandhiji may come out victorious. We pray to God for his safety.



Disturbed by Gandhiji's fasting, Gurudev went to Pune.

Gurudev! The British Government has conceded our demand. I shall break my fast. But, before that please recite a part of *Gitanjali*, for me.



Gurudev! Please admit Indu in your University.

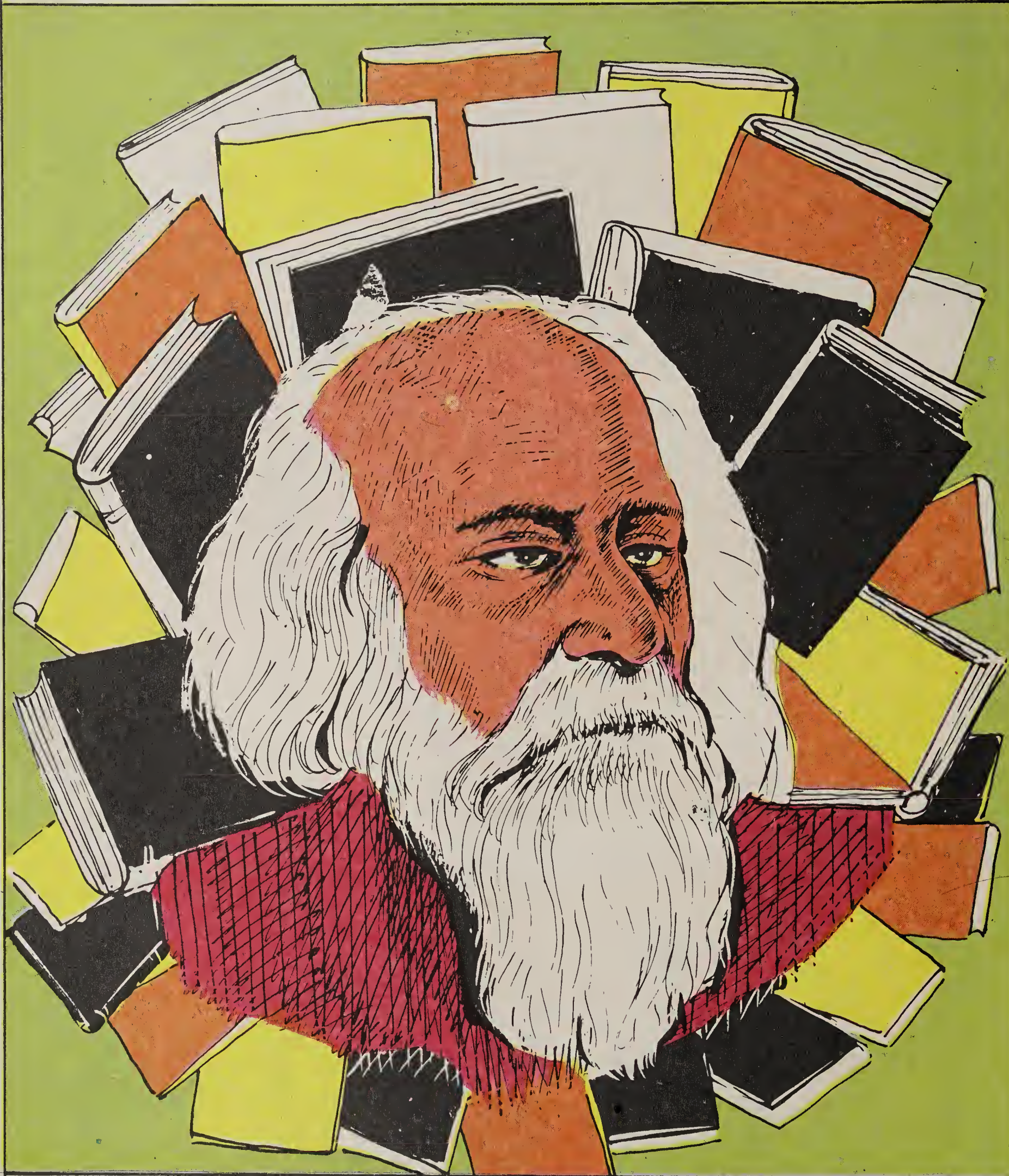
Why not? It's a pleasure.



On 7th May 1940, at a special function at Santiniketan, a doctorate degree was conferred on Tagore by the Oxford University which was represented by Sir Maurice Gwyer.



Upto his last breath, Gurudev spent most of his time in writing. In 1941, at Santiniketan, the poet's birthday was celebrated. On this occasion he gave a written message to the nation called 'Crisis in Civilization'. It was published in all the newspapers of the country.



.. and on 7th August 1941, the world renowned poet passed away after a prolonged illness. Thus a magnificent life, as wonderful as his poetry, came to an end. But, his writings, which can never die keep him alive in our midst, even today.



“Where the mind is without fear and the head held high; Where
knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depths of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening
thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake!”

Rabindranath Tagore



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